



# Housing Delivery and Investment Plan

A year of progress – 2020-2021

## Building for the future

# Our Housing Delivery and Investment Plan

In 2020, Sunderland City Council set out its intention to embark on an ambitious programme to help meet the housing needs of residents now and in the future.

Approved by Sunderland's Cabinet in February 2020, our Housing Delivery and Investment Plan paved the way for a radical new approach to housing in the city, that started with a bid to return to Registered Provider status, the first step on a journey to delivering our own properties for affordable rent.

Forty years since the last council houses were built in Sunderland, ground has been broken and the foundations laid for homes that will ensure the city has the range of homes needed to support vulnerable residents and growing families.

In the year that has passed, Sunderland City Council has mobilised, and what was an aspiration just 12 months ago is quickly becoming reality.

Empty properties are being brought back to life, transformed into attractive family homes. And bricks and mortar are coming together to create accessible new properties for vulnerable residents.

Our five-year Housing Delivery and Investment Plan is driving ahead, complementing the work of private housebuilders, social housing providers already operating in the city and ensuring that we, as a council, are meeting the needs of our residents.

This report captures the rapid progress we have made in the last 12 months, and the significant social impact already achieved through this ambitious programme.



**Fiona Brown**  
Executive Director of  
Neighbourhoods



**Cllr Rebecca Atkinson**  
Cabinet Member for  
Dynamic City



# The vision

Sunderland’s City Plan laid out a vision to forge a healthy, vibrant, dynamic future for the city and its residents. To make Sunderland a place where people can be proud to live, work and play; where no community is left behind.

The Housing Delivery and Investment Plan aims to ensure that our residents have access to the homes they need as they grow old. That vulnerable residents are able to live in properties that support them to live independently for longer, in which they are enabled to live a happy, fulfilled life. And that we tackle empty homes, so often a blight on their community, breathing new life into bricks and mortar and creating attractive new homes for our residents.



# The story so far

Already our vision is becoming reality. Much has been achieved in the year since Cabinet approved our Housing Delivery and Investment Plan, and the early success we have seen is fuelling us further. We’re on track to meet the five-year targets we set in 2020.





## Timeline

- 26 November 2019**  
Registered Provider Status achieved

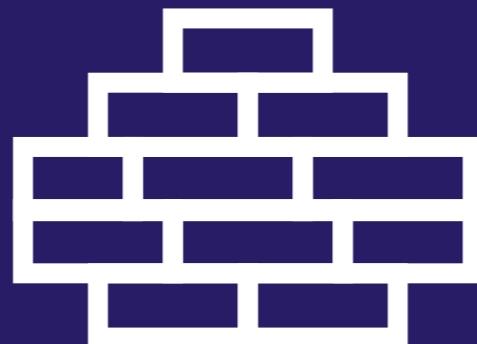
**August 2020**  
Restructure and new Housing Development Team in place
- 11 February 2020**  
Housing Delivery and Investment Plan approved by Cabinet

**September 2020**  
First property renovated and first tenant signs agreement
- 24 February 2020**  
Investment Partner with Homes England status achieved, allowing Sunderland City Council to participate in the SOAHP 2016-21 and associated affordable homes grant programmes

**September 2020**  
Stanley Terrace and Albert Place start on site
- May 2020**  
First empty property acquired for refurbishment

**October 2020**  
First completions with SME partner of new homes at Elmwood Avenue
- July 2020**  
Initial Homes England grant allocation of £1.5m secured and grant agreement signed, with additional grant secured bringing total grant to date to £2.1m

**February 2021**  
Professional Services Framework in place
- July 2020**  
First construction site start at Cork Street



## Improving lives

Realising the ambitious targets set out in the Housing Delivery and Investment Plan is about much more than ticking boxes. The work we are doing is transforming lives, ensuring our residents – including some of the city’s most vulnerable people – are supported to realise their potential in homes that enable and empower them to live independently for longer.

Pauline Askew, who suffers from a range of debilitating health conditions including COPD, depression and mobility issues following a double knee replacement, was ‘absolutely thrilled’ after being supported with a move to her stunning two-bed council-owned bungalow in Southwick.

62-year-old Pauline, her partner George and son Peter, downsized from a 3-bedroom house to her new rented 2-bed bungalow, after it became difficult to manage the stairs in her previous property. The move has made a hugely positive difference to her quality of life, and that of her 39-year-old son who has cerebral palsy.

**“It was getting harder and harder to manage in my old house. Simple things like going to the toilet upstairs was becoming a struggle with my knees, and it was really awful during an anxious year, as I have stayed at home because of Coronavirus and the health problems I have. I registered to move to a new house and was contacted the next day to be offered the chance to look around Elmwood Avenue. I was blown away by it. You couldn’t not be impressed. It’s beautiful. It has a lovely high gloss kitchen, carpeted throughout and I have so much space. I couldn’t be happier.”**

Leoni Simpson was handed the keys to her beautiful new home in Pallion in September 2020 after the property was brought back to life having stood empty for a year. The semi-detached house was been completely refurbished to bring it up to the high standard required by the council, ready to rent, with Leoni becoming the first council tenant in 20 years.

**“I’ve been looking for somewhere for a while so I was over the moon when I was offered this. It’s lovely inside. I’ve hit really lucky.”**

“It will be wonderful to have more dedicated housing for the older residents of Sunderland. Transitions in later life often result in the need for more suitable, affordable social housing. Many older people are in need of accessible and adapted properties which improve their quality of life and overall wellbeing”.

Tracy Collins, Director, Age UK Sunderland



Robert Cooper, 73, relocated to one of five new bungalows in Elmwood Avenue, Southwick, after a long-term condition made life in his two-storey home difficult to manage.

**“I have pulmonary fibrosis, and it was becoming a real strain getting up and down the stairs in my old house,” explains Rob, who lives alone.**

**“I lived in Wear View for a long time, but I had downsized and moved to Houghton a few years ago. My family live in Redhouse, so they wanted me to look for something closer to them. I put my name down for a new house and I was delighted when the council got in touch to offer me a brand-new bungalow.**

**“I was speechless when I came and saw this place. It’s absolutely perfect. It would hard to find one thing to complain about. The team at the council who helped me with this were absolutely brilliant. They made sure I knew where everything was when I moved in and helped me feel really settled.”**





## Improving communities



Empty properties so often blight the communities they once served, becoming a magnet for public nuisance and other problems such as fly-tipping, waste and vandalism. Our work is helping restore peace to neighbouring homes that are affected by the issues vacant homes can create.



### Wordsworth Avenue East in Houghton-le-Spring

Left to fall into a state of disrepair by its absent owner, the property had become a target for disorder, and neighbours were suffering.

After being alerted to problems, we quickly stepped in, taking formal action after the owner failed to take action to put an end to the misery it was bringing to the lives of neighbours in the street.

It was only when the landlord faced prosecution that they started to engage positively and agreed to sell the property to the council. It is now set to be fully refurbished and brought back into use, with work likely to be complete by spring 2021, paving the way for it to once again become a happy family home.



### Cellar Hill Terrace in Houghton-le-Spring

For almost 12 years, a home at Cellar Hill Terrace has stood unoccupied. Though the property hasn't attracted nuisance or disorder in the time it has been vacant, it is feared the empty shell will become increasingly problematic, as problems created by a lack of upkeep and maintenance build-up.

With a programme of work underway, it is expected that the home will be ready to welcome a new resident in spring 2021, over a decade after it was last a functioning home.



# Improving the economy



We're determined to ensure that the Housing Delivery and Investment Plan delivers real added value to the city, that every pound we spend brings about the maximum social and economic value for the people of Sunderland.

Each of the schemes we progress with will see hundreds of thousands of pounds pumped into the local economy, sustaining local jobs directly and through the supply chain.

Monkwearmouth-based housing company, MCC Homes, has developed a partnership with the council that has already seen the firm commit to deliver more than 20 new properties in the city.

Five bungalows in Elmwood Avenue, Southwick are complete and a further 11 bungalows, as well as five houses for supported accommodation are expected to get started this year on a different site in Southwick. It will be MCC's largest scheme to date.

The company, which was founded in 2017, specialises in delivering smaller residential developments that take unused pockets of land and bring them back to life. Through its work, the firm is adding value to the city economy by prioritising local suppliers, as well as creating apprenticeship opportunities for young people from the area. Its entire on-site team is from Sunderland.

Sunderland City Council prides itself on procuring partners that will add maximum social and economic value, and – though this programme – we are supporting businesses that give back to the city.

Luke Lee, operations director of MCC Homes explains:

**"We are delighted to be developing a strong partnership with Sunderland City Council and we are really pleased that in working with us, they're backing a local business and Sunderland supply chains, who we always prioritise on our projects. As someone who was born and lives in Sunderland, it's fantastic to be able to work on projects that add value to my home city, and that give us spending power to invest in the local supply chain, delivering homes that are made in Sunderland, by Sunderland people."**

As part of the Housing Delivery and Investment Plan, we have appointed a framework of professional services providers, allowing us to quickly call off support to ensure we deliver with the same pace and vigour that we have achieved so far. As well as adding value to the city, this extension to our in-house team will allow us to implement plans quickly and meet the delivery aspirations set out in the plan.

We're working with a range of local artists to ensure the creative sector in the city benefits from our Housing Delivery and Investment Plan. We'll be commissioning a range of stunning sculptures and public art, that will stand among some of our new developments, to ensure we create attractive communities, and boost the economy in the process.



## Elmwood Avenue in numbers

**100% of council investment spent in Sunderland with local businesses, local people and a local supply chain**

5

bungalows offered at affordable rent for over 55s

7

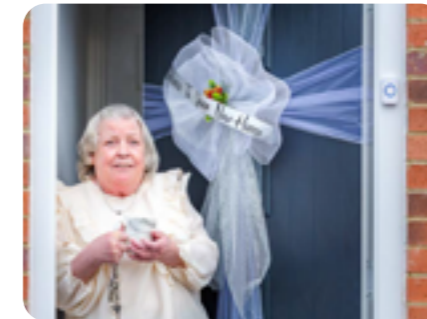
local people employed directly to work on this development

1

Sunderland architect, designing attractive new homes and one environmental tester, supporting ahead of development

**£5,600**

boost for local businesses through the purchase of blinds and carpets to fit out the homes



**£625,000**

boost for local developer MCC Homes

3

apprentices – training in bricklaying, electrical and plumbing



**£125,000**

of Homes England funding secured to support the purchase of these stunning new properties



51

local businesses supporting the delivery of internal and external works



Before

After



# Improving standards



The Housing Delivery and Investment Plan has a keen focus on quality. We are driving up the standard of homes, using our schemes to raise the bar and ensure that social housing residents enjoy the best possible quality of life in high-grade accommodation.

We're not content to develop 'homes'. We want to develop innovative spaces that make use of technology to enable our residents, and that are of a quality that raises aspirations and gives people homes they can be proud of.

Like Cork Street, our bungalows at Albert Place will be Category 3 compliant, with 5G provision – again ensuring that those who live there enjoy a home that is custom built to meet their needs.

**In the empty homes we bring back to life, we aim to create superb accommodation, with attractive fixed fittings to ensure the finish is aspirational. From empty shells, to comfortable, modern properties, our work is transforming streets from the outside and changing the lives of the residents who step into their beautiful new home.**

Stanley Terrace bungalows for our older residents enjoy 5G access – something that fits with Sunderland's Smart City ambitions, ensuring we connect and enable our people.

All of our sites are designed to Secure by Design (SBD) standards, to help reduce and deter crime in the immediate surroundings of the properties and deliver safe communities where residents can have peaceful enjoyment of their home. We also work to Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS), which sets out requirements for internal floor areas. This means that each of the plots have the right amount of floor space to suit the level of occupancy.

And in properties designed for our vulnerable residents, we raise the bar again. Almost every one of our bungalows at Cork Street are Building Regulations Part M4(3) – Category 3 compliant. This means they are full wheelchair-user dwellings, each fully equipped with assistive technology and 5G provision which enable residents to live independently for longer, with support to raise their quality of life.

We are also building a new NDRC (Northeast Disabilities Resource Centre) building at Cork Street, a disability day centre that will provide additional support to vulnerable residents. These are life-changing additions to the community and enable us to better support people who need help most.

**And the city's drive to carbon neutrality will also be supported by our sustainable dwellings. We work hard to ensure that the homes we build are designed with the environment in mind. And it's not just about the in-built features of the home, but about enabling residents to reduce their carbon footprint when they move in. That's why our homes feature smart devices that help people who live there to reduce energy consumption – not only keeping bills down, but helping the planet in the process.**









For more information about the Housing  
Delivery and Investment Plan please  
contact Amanda Gallagher on  
[amanda.gallagher@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.gallagher@sunderland.gov.uk)